

**DEVELOPING NEW MEDIA LITERACY AMONG  
SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN MALAYSIA: CASE  
STUDIES OF MEDIA MAKING ON ENVIRONMENTAL  
ISSUES**

by

**NUNNA VENKATA PRASAD**

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## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

<b>BBC</b>	-	British Broadcasting Corporation
<b>CD</b>	-	Compact Disc
<b>CNN</b>	-	Cable News Network
<b>DVD</b>	-	Digital Versatile Disc
<b>HBO</b>	-	Home Box Office
<b>ICT</b>	-	Information and Communication Technologies
<b>MCMC</b>	-	Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Corporation
<b>NILA</b>	-	National Information Literacy Agenda
<b>NITC</b>	-	National Information and Technology Council
<b>RTM 1</b>	-	<i>Radio Televisyen Malaysia Satu</i>
<b>RTM 2</b>	-	<i>Radio Televisyen Malaysia Dua</i>
<b>SMK</b>	-	<i>Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan</i>
<b>SMS</b>	-	Short Message System
<b>SPM</b>	-	<i>Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia</i>
<b>TV</b>	-	Television
<b>TV1</b>	-	<i>Televisyen Satu</i>
<b>TV2</b>	-	<i>Televisyen Dua</i>
<b>TV3</b>	-	<i>Televisyen Tiga</i>
<b>USM</b>	-	Universiti Sains Malaysia

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# **Membangunkan Literasi Media Baru Dalam Kalangan Pelajar Sekolah Menengah di Malaysia: Kajian Kes Pembikinan Media Mengenai Alam Sekitar**

## **ABSTRAK**

Dalam dunia media baru ini adalah penting bagi pelajar-pelajar di Malaysia untuk membangunkan rasa kesedaran dan penglibatan aktif media untuk memudahkan pembelajaran sosial tentang dunia di sekeliling mereka. Literasi media adalah unsur yang diperlukan untuk membangunkan kefahaman kritikal, kreativiti, dan penyertaan aktif dalam pembinaan budaya pembelajaran produktif pelajar. Alam sekitar pula adalah antara isu yang memerlukan perhatian segera memandangkan dunia menjadi semakin kurang hijau dan kualiti alam sekitar kian menurun. Untuk itu, pelajar boleh menyumbang kepada penyelesaian masalah ini dengan menyuarakan keprihatinan, pendapat dan pandangan mereka melalui kemahiran literasi media.

Tujuan utama kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji amalan-amalan literasi media pelajar dengan menggunakan kes alam sekitar dalam pembikinan media. Tumpuan diberikan terhadap tiga komponen utama amalan literasi media yang berkualiti iaitu proses, teks dan penyelidikan yang dibangunkan oleh Thoman & Jolls (2004). Lebih khusus lagi, kajian ini memberi tumpuan kepada amalan penggunaan media, penglibatan dengan mesej media, pengalaman pembikinan media dan corak penyelidikan kritikal yang digunakan. Kaedah yang digunakan untuk kajian ini adalah satu bentuk penyelidikan

tindakan yang melibatkan pelajar melakukan produksi video pendek yang bertemakan alam sekitar. Kajian ini telah dijalankan dengan melibatkan pelajar-pelajar tingkatan empat di tiga buah negeri iaitu Pulau Pinang, Sarawak dan Selangor.

Secara keseluruhannya, kajian menunjukkan bahawa walaupun terdapat kesukaran dalam memahami persekitaran dan penyelidikan kritikal terhadap media, pelajar cepat belajar dan melibatkan diri dalam pembikinan media secara produktif. Kajian ini juga telah menunjukkan bahawa penerbitan video digital boleh mendorong secara berkesan untuk membangunkan tiga komponen teras amalan literasi media iaitu proses, teks dan penyelidikan. Menurut pelajar terbabit, kelebihan utama daripada pengalaman ini adalah mereka telah belajar kemahiran menerbitkan media, kemahiran berfikir, mempertingkatkan pemahaman dan penghargaan terhadap media visual, dan juga membangkitkan kesedaran mereka terhadap isu-isu alam sekitar. Walau bagaimanapun, hasil kajian ini turut menunjukkan bahawa wujud kebimbangan, optimisme dan keperluan memupuk penyertaan aktif media dalam kalangan pelajar dalam menyuarakan pandangan mengenai isu-isu alam sekitar dalam negara.

# **Developing New Media Literacy among Secondary School Students in Malaysia: Case Studies of Media Making on Environmental Issues**

## **ABSTRACT**

In the present new media world, it is essential for the students in Malaysia to develop a sense of media awareness and activism to facilitate social learning in relation to the surrounding world. In building a productive learning culture among the students, media literacy is a necessary intervention in developing critical understandings, creative abilities, and active participations. Developing new media literacy on environment among secondary school students in Malaysia is important as the world is becoming less green and the environment is declining. Students can contribute to this cause, by voicing their concerns, opinions and views by using their new media literacy skills on environment.

The main aim of this study was to examine students' media literacy practices using the case of media making on environmental issues with a focus on three core components of quality media literacy practice namely process, text and inquiry developed by Thoman & Jolls (2004). More specifically, the study looked at students' media consumption practices, engagement with media messages, environmental awareness, media making experiences in terms of developing production themes, narrative analysis, video making and critical inquiry patterns in terms of their understanding on the role of video production in developing identity and self-expression. The methodology applied for this study is a form of action-research which involved students' doing short video productions on the theme of environment. The study was conducted in three states Penang, Sarawak and Selangor, where students from Form 4 class participated in the project.

Overall, the study revealed that despite difficulties in understanding the environment and critical media inquiry, students are quick to learn and are able to engage in media making on environment in a productive way. The study also has demonstrated that the framework developed is successful in developing the three core components of media literacy practice namely process, text and inquiry developed by Thoman & Jolls (2004). The key benefits of the experience according to the students were the learning of media creation and thinking skills, the enhanced understanding and appreciation of the visual media and an increased awareness towards the environmental issues surrounding them. However, the results of the study present a cause for concern, optimism and the need for inculcating active media participation of the students' voices on the environmental issues facing the country.

## **CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Students and the New Media World**

In the present media world, students are receiving information through images and sounds in a variety of media forms and they are engaged in a variety of media activities such as uploading & downloading videos, blogging, posting on walls, communicating through social networks, podcasting, Short Message System (SMS), computer games, digital television and other such interactive media forms. Moreover, homes have become media- saturated due to the multiplication of personally owned media, diversification of media and media contents (Livingstone, 2002). In this regard, Osgerby (2004) & Livingstone (2002) argue that today, many students' lives are dominated by media where they grow up with television, digital versatile disc (DVD) player, radio, compact disc (CD) players, video games, mobile phones, computers, internet and i pods. At a very young age, children are learning about key pads, joysticks, mouse pads and remote controls. According to Strasburger & Wilson (2002, p.8) "Youth's media use is at an all time high. They spend anywhere from one third to one half of their waking hours with some form of mass media." Therefore, today's students are facing a media world which is very different from the one faced by their predecessors. The growing numbers of media outlets and technologies are having significant influence on the students today both socially and culturally (Buckingham, 2002a).

Currently, the capability to comprehend print is no longer adequate when much of the information we receive consists of a mixture of still and moving images, sound, and text (Buckingham, 2003). According to Bazalgette (2000, p.4), a 'critical understanding of

film, video and television is becoming an integral part of literacy and the spread of digital technologies means that the ability to make and manipulate moving images will become an ever more important skill.' Considine (2002, p.25) adds that, "It is no longer enough to simply read and write students must become literate in the understanding of visual messages as well." It is thus important that students must learn to spot a stereotype, distinguish facts from fiction, and news from propaganda. To do that, students need media literacy skills to understand and interact with the media analytically, critically and knowledgeably. Media literacy is generally defined as "the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and communicate messages in a variety of forms" (Aufderheide, 1993, p.20) and "a media literate person can decode, evaluate, analyze and produce both print and electronic media (Aufderheide, 1997, p.79)." In other words, it is the ability to sieve through and critically analyze the new media messages that inform, entertain and sell to us every day in the present media landscape.

Buckingham (2007) argues that schools have hardly begun to teach students how to view or listen critically to media messages, despite the fact that students are exposed to various forms of messages. In addition, he argues that this situation presents a current lack of support and advice available for students to negotiate unreliable and contradictory information available in new media. As such, countries like Canada, America, Australia, United Kingdom and a few other nations realizing the potential of media literacy have started media literacy projects in school curriculum in an effort to enhance students' new media literacy skills. However, in the case of Malaysia, there is no sufficient effort has



been put in to develop new media literacy skills among the school students (Shanthi & Khoo, 2006).

## **1.2 Focus on Media Literacy in Malaysia**

In Malaysia, the schools have given attention mostly to the curriculum issues rather than on learning skills that are required for the students in this 21st century. Malaysian students without proper training and knowledge in media literacy lacked the critical competency skills to sieve through the enormous information overload in the mass media and internet (Shanthi & Khoo, 2006). A thorough search of information related to the nation's statements and policies about media literacy in Malaysia reveals that most of the efforts taken by the government so far are in the form of information and language literacy rather than on media literacy. For example, in the year 1996, the National Information and Technology Council (NITC) was launched to provide the foundation and framework for the utilization of information and communication technologies (ICT) which focused more on collection and utilization of information through new media and didn't include aspects of media awareness (Abu Bakar, 2010).

A decade later, the government through Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Corporation (MCMC) has embarked on a research programme with public and private universities to establish knowledge resources on the use of new media by Malaysians (Abu Bakar, 2010). This was an attempt to engage the public to regulate the content themselves through education and awareness so that they are empowered to manage and evaluate content. Thus, a National Information Literacy Agenda or NILA was formed to plan, implement and evaluate information literacy programmes. Once again, here the

focus was more towards information literacy rather than on media literacy as it is defined earlier.

Eventually, the government recognizing the importance of information literacy among primary and secondary school students started Malaysian Smart School across the nation to enable students to learn on how to process and manipulate information (Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 2011). Smart school was set up to teach students on technology and its role in creating an understanding towards the media content. The aim was to train students to think critically and to reflect on what they have learned, as well as to transfer and apply knowledge from one discipline to another and to daily life. Once again the programme focused more on information literacy and competency in computers. Moreover, the programme was accessible to only a selected number of students from each school.

Abu Bakar (2010) has pointed out that the government has given priority to teach media literacy to the university students and people in the industries whereas at school level the focus was more on information and language literacy.

To summarise, Malaysian government's policies and efforts towards primary and secondary school students seem to focus on enhancing the wide usage of information and communication technologies among students for learning (Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 2011). The government believes that students' exploration of ICT would create citizens who are creative and innovative towards technology and its various tools. On one hand, the government has recognized the importance of ICT and language literacy among

the students in the present world; however, it has failed to recognize the importance of media literacy which has become an essential survival skill for the present generation of students.

Further, Ambigapathy & Kalantzis (2001) in their book titled 'Literacy Matters: Issues for New Times' points out that Malaysia is lacking trained teachers with media literacy background and further argues that it is important that teachers' are informed of the use of multiple forms of communications including the computer programmes and networks, which will determine their ability to produce educated and well informed students. In addition, they contend that the low-level of engagement of students towards media literacy activities is a cause for concern, even though Malaysia has many cyber-cafes and computers providing those media services for students in most towns in Malaysia.

Further, commenting on media literacy in Malaysian schools, Shanthi & Khoo (2006, p.1) argue:

Learning in Malaysia however continues to render visual media study invisible within the formal primary and secondary school settings and there is a clear case for media literacy to be developed in ways that enable young people to comprehend daily life and media experiences critically as well as to engage actively and creatively in the various spheres.

As such, it is apparent that not much effort has been put by either government, media institutions or schools in Malaysia in addressing this issue faced by the student community.

### **1.3 Developing New Media Literacy**

The media undoubtedly plays a significant role in conveying and shaping information that people receive and hear (Livingstone, 2002). Information and news about lifestyle, business, education, and government, are made available from almost an infinite amount of sources and with the existence of the internet, access to those information is worldwide. However, problems arise when the credibility of any particular information is questioned. This is increasingly true in the context of the media. For example, the source of information that could be trusted, to understand the difference between news and propaganda, to know the producer of the message and his intended purpose and finally to understand the effect of ownership of media companies on the information it produces or relays (Thoman & Jolls, 2005). These few questions, apart from many, all fall under the umbrella term of ‘media literacy’.

Among the many definitions of media literacy, one of the complete and interesting definitions comes from Potter (2005, p. 22):

Media literacy as a set of perspectives that we actively use to expose ourselves to the media to interpret the meaning of the messages we encounter. We build our perspectives from knowledge structures. To build our knowledge structures, we need tools and raw materials. These tools are our skills. The raw material is information from the media and from the real world. Active use means that we are aware of the messages and are consciously interacting with them.

Potter (2005), further states media literacy is a multidimensional concept with many interesting facets and each one of us occupy some position on this media literacy continuum. Similarly, Lim & Nekmat (2008) argue that media literacy for an individual

who consumes and produces is multidimensional and it encompasses an extensive variety of skills and knowledge structures. With these skills students will be able to deal with visuals and messages surrounding them in a critical and productive way.

Students need to understand how to critically assess media content so that they can derive maximum benefit and minimize chances of misinformation (Lim & Nekmat, 2008). If students do not develop a good understanding of the media and their messages then the biggest concern as expressed by Potter (2004, p. 24):

“Youth may develop misunderstandings and misperceptions about their world. Media is leaving young people to faulty beliefs; either they will accept the beliefs presented to them in the media or they will construct their own beliefs which may be faulty.”

Thoman & Jolls (2005) argue that education in new media literacy should cover key questions about the media such as what, where, when, who, and how within the context of media creation, presentation, distribution, and control. Further, Buckingham (2002a) considers media production as an important component of developing new media literacy skills among students. Among the various forms of digital media production available for the students such as still pictures, music, multimedia, web pages and so on, digital video production is considered to be a valuable option as it develops both creative and critical thinking among the students (Buckingham, 2002a). For making digital videos, students need production skills such as acting, scripting, directing, audio mixing, editing, graphics and so on which has become an essential skill in this present new media world where students are uploading and downloading various kinds of digital media. According to Gauntlett (1996), students need to develop these production skills to participate actively

with new media and to express their ideas and views regarding the issues concerning them, which will enable them to communicate effectively to other people in the community. Therefore, students should learn production skills not only to appreciate and create media works but also to critically evaluate the messages encountered by them in the new media (Buckingham, 2002a). Altogether, it is essential that the present generation of students need to develop their new media literacy skills in the present world.

The issue is how to develop media literacy skills among the students in Malaysia. There are a few frameworks developed by media scholars (Potter, 2004, Buckingham, 2002a, & Silverblatt 2007) for developing new media literacy among the students, however, one of the simplest and more viable framework comes from Thoman & Jolls (2004) who argue that the characteristics of quality media literacy practice depends on three core components namely process, text and inquiry.

1. Process - explores the questions that arise when one engages critically with the media.
2. Text- includes any message form – verbal, aural or visual. The basic assumption behind this component is that understanding of a text involves not just deconstruction activities i.e. analysing a message that already exists but also construction activities.
3. Inquiry- is learning to ask important questions about whatever we see, watch or read.

As such, in Malaysian context, examining and exploring how Malaysian students approach the research elements under these three components in their media literacy practice would inform us about the issues and concerns in their media literacy practice and help to develop students' media literacy skills.

#### **1.4 Impact and Implications of New Media Literacy**

The impact or consequences of developing new media literacy among the students are many, for example, Considine (2002, p.13) argues that the students would be able to:

1. Recognize the power of the media to influence.
2. Recognize how the presentation of information and ideas is influenced by social, cultural, political and historical events and
3. Produce media in various formats.

Further, Buckingham (2002b) argues that media literacy develops both critical understanding and active participation and it is about developing students' critical and creative abilities. In addition, Buckingham (2002b) points out that apart from developing self-expression and technical skills, it would also improve students understanding of how the media operate and to reflect on the media. The other implications of developing new media literacy are it builds creativity, participatory culture and empowerment among the students (Gauntlett, 2000).

#### **1.5 Digital Video Production and New Media Literacy**

Digital Video is now arguably the primary medium of visual communication with the internet and television being the most effective platforms. As pointed out by Buckingham

(2002a), digital video production has been a contributing factor to the formation of media literacy in its audiences. In making them “writers” as well as “readers” of the visual media (Buckingham, 1993, p.297), they comprehend the implications of how the media can present information differently, to give emphasis or exclude it (Gauntlett, 1996). Tyner (2003) observes that in the course of producing a video, relationships are developed when students are provided with a platform to freely discuss their issues and problems. Most importantly, digital video production helps in learning about students view about a particular issue. According to Niestyto et. al, ( 2003, p. 463 ) “ to learn about young people’s views and perspectives, we should give them opportunities to express themselves through their own media productions, as well as share their creations with other youths.” Tyner (2003) observes that students are able to apply skills of critical analysis, thinking, synthesizing, evaluating knowledge, and attitude when digital tools are utilized. Further, Buckingham (2002a) points out that digital video develops creativity among the students at the same time enables their voices to be heard.

Featherstone (1995) argues that the increased access to media making tools among students worldwide can help develop transnational cultures through their own distinctive practices, bodies of knowledge, conventions, and lifestyles. Lim & Nekmat (2008) argue that media literacy programmes that emphasize video production may have more significant long-term impacts as they enable students to voice their concerns and raise public awareness about issues related to them. In addition, Lim & Nekmat (2008) argue that the media literacy skills imparted would develop social activism and democratization. As such, students should be taught video production skills to produce alternative representations of themselves and for their voices to be heard.



## **1.6 Making a Case for Media Making on Environmental Issues**

Media literacy is not limited to a particular subject discipline, it can embrace diverse disciplines. Students can contribute significantly through their media literacy skills on any given issue (Gauntlett, 1996). In the present times, one of the areas that require the immediate attention of the present generation of students is the environment, especially with the world getting less green and the quality of environment declining. Students form a major force in the society, who could protect the environment collectively through their actions (Lee, 2008). As pointed out by Lee (2008), students constitute a large section of citizen group with the potential for constructing a powerful collective force in society for environmental protection. In addition, he observes that students' are found to be more concerned about the deterioration of environmental quality than the adults.

Nowadays, more students are experiencing nature through television and the web, the concern is about the ways these media shape their views regarding environment in their daily lives. Television frames influence the understanding of natural environmental issues among students and it is asserted that television teaching environment science today is like trying to give an eye drop of water to students drowning in 'Coca-Cola'. Popular media images are depicting natural environment as both 'friend' and 'foe' and also the media portrayal of nature is hardly consistent, which means the representations of nature become problematic. Images of oil spills, landslides clash with ads depicting the latest sport utility vehicles climbing a rugged mountain ridge (Cox, 2006). Works by Friedman (2004) & Meisner (as cited in Cox, 2006) on television and environment, project both

popular and contradictory images of nature and environment. Meisner's (as cited in Cox, 2006, p. 156) study reports four major stable and recurring trends;

(1) Nature as victim

(2) Nature as a sick patient

(3) Nature as a problem and

(4) Nature as a resource.

Todd (as cited in Cox, 2006) studied 'The Simpsons' and notes that its characters display a disregard for the environment and often opposes nature. The confusing images of TV unveil a problematic relationship between students and television in an increasing globalized and commercialized environment in Europe and Asia (Bonner, 2003, Buckingham, 2000, Cox, 2006 & Goonasekera, 2001).

Moreover, a focus on television marketing myths in relation to the environment raises concern on the unintentional effects on student learning minds. For example, most television images on weapons, automobiles suggest that these products are so natural, clean and do not cause environmental damage. To look at television images for the commercial sale of products is damaging to the environment. All in all, in the present media landscape, there is a need for developing students' media literacy skills to engage critically with the media on environment media and also to contribute towards the issues of the environment. Gauntlett (1996) argues that students to participate in this cause for the environment should be able to express through the media their voices and views on

environmental issues that are affecting them to their own community and to the people in power.

According to Goodwin et al., (2008), one of the ways to promote pro-environmentalism among students is to focus on improving their environmental attitudes and behaviour. Similarly, Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) argue that environmentally responsible behaviour is, first, a function of behavioral intentions and second, one of attitudes that in turn is affected by knowledge. To develop environment knowledge, assigning students to produce media on environment would be a good option as it has been reported by researchers (Buckingham, 2003 & Gauntlett, 1996) that digital video production increases students' interest in the engaged topic. In addition, Fleetwood (2005) argues that by sharing the media through the web students would be able to appeal to their community of students locally and globally.

Therefore, combining both the issues of developing new media literacy and the environment, this study designed a new media literacy project on the topic of environment.

## **1.7 Problem Statement**

1. As pointed out, secondary school students in Malaysia today are facing a media landscape that is complex and rapidly changing. Further, the growth of satellite television channels and the internet in the past decades are offering the students in Malaysia new opportunities and threats. No doubt, the media today is having

significant influence on the students in Malaysia both socially and culturally (Shanthi & Khoo, 2006). Therefore, the relevance of teaching and learning new media literacy in today's rapidly changing media world has become acutely critical. In the current media landscape in Malaysia, it is increasingly important to engage students in reading media critically and in making media productively.

2. As discussed earlier in the chapter that new media literacy is an important aspect of productive learning in managing the new life and facing the media landscape today. However, not much is known about the way secondary school students in Malaysia are engaging with new media and their media literacy practices within or out of school contexts.
3. The case for media literacy can be dealt effectively to another significant issue the environment. Achieving and maintaining high levels of awareness and understanding of environment media matters among Malaysian students is essential, if the nation is to succeed in effectively conserving our environment. Apart from this, the perceived controversies surrounding Malaysian environment issues and commonly held attitudes towards the role of the media and the role of students in the protection of our environment illustrates the importance of developing environment media literacy among students in Malaysia today. Environment media literacy would enable students to voice their concerns or opinions about environment and also to bring about change in their fellow student community towards environment (Gauntlett, 1996). The students' views towards the media, environment and the capacity to do video making will provide

opportunities to examine how media literacy practices are approached by secondary school students in Malaysia. More specifically, we need to know how students approach the concepts of process, text and inquiry in their media literacy practices (Thoman & Jolls, 2004).

## **1.8 Research Objectives**

In general, the study aims to examine students' media literacy practices using the case of media making on environmental issues with a focus on three core components process, text and inquiry.

The study will assess the following specific objectives:

1. To explore students' media consumption practices.
2. To examine students' engagement with media messages.
3. To explore students' environmental awareness in Malaysia.
4. To examine students' media making experiences in terms of developing production themes, narrative analysis and video making.
5. To explore students' critical inquiry patterns in terms of their understanding on the role of video production in developing identity and self- expression.

Overall, this study is interested in developing students' environment media literacy skills by designing a project that combines environmental issues and new media literacy.

## **1.9 Significance of the Study**

Since there is no significant research study conducted on developing new media literacy skills among secondary school students in Malaysia, this study would provide a meaningful contribution to the subject. More specifically, this study provides an understanding of students' patterns of media use especially on television and internet, their views on environmental issues facing Malaysia and their awareness on global environmental issues. It also provides insights on students' environment media making experience in terms of developing production themes, narrative analysis, video making and about their critical inquiry patterns in terms of their understanding on the role of video production in developing identity and self-expression. Altogether, it provides information on how students' approach the research elements under the three core concepts of media literacy namely process, text and inquiry using environment media making as a case study.

The studies conducted earlier focused mostly on primary school children, whereas this study would contribute to the understanding of secondary school students' media literacy practices in school settings. Moreover, this thesis will be useful as a research and reference guide to secondary schools, policy makers, planners and media education practitioners. The findings of the study would generate statements about environment media literacy skills and students' media production experiences for future studies. The knowledge generated will contribute to the cause of developing media literacy movements in Malaysia. Most importantly, it will also fill the knowledge gap existing

with regard to developing new media literacy skills among students in secondary school settings in Malaysia.

#### **1.10 Limitations to the Study**

Some of the limitations identified with this study are it looks at media literacy practices from the school factor only. However, to develop media literacy skills successfully among students it requires collaboration among parents, teachers, media specialists and administrators. The selection of schools for the research project was done in a random way as allowed by the ministry of education. The limited time permitted for undertaking this research in schools didn't allow for more time with the students. There is lack of previous research works on this topic in Malaysia. These were some of the limitations under which the study had to be carried out.

## **CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2:1 Broad Outlook on Media Literacy Development**

#### **2.1.1 Defining Media Literacy**

According to Eagle (2007), media literacy overall has multiple definitions depending on the discipline perspective of researchers. In addition, Eagle (2007) argues that media literacy may be seen as a form of attempted protectionism, to immunize children against harmful imagery and ideology. Burton (2005, p. 95) defines media literacy as the ability to ‘read’ and understand visual, aural and digital messages. In addition, (Burton, 2005, p.95) defines the various dimensions of media literacy into cognitive, emotional, aesthetic and infer.

1. Cognitive: understanding how the message was produced and the symbols it used.
2. Emotional: Understanding the cues that are used to trigger emotional responses in the audience.
3. Aesthetic: Understanding and appreciating the craft of the creators of the media.
4. Infer: the ability to infer the values.

Another interesting definition comes from Silverblatt (2007, p.95), who emphasizes the following elements in media literacy:

1. a critical thinking skill that allows audiences to develop independent judgments about media content;
2. an understanding of the process of mass communication;



3. an awareness of the impact of media on the individual and society;
4. the development of strategies with which to discuss and analyze media messages;
5. an awareness of media content as “text” that provides insight into our contemporary culture and ourselves;
6. the cultivation of an enhanced enjoyment , understanding, and appreciation of media content; and
7. in the case of media communicators, the ability to produce effective and responsible media messages

As defined earlier, the term media literacy means many things to many people, however, it is generally defined as “the ability to access, analyse, evaluate and communicate messages in a variety of forms” (Aufderheide, 1993, p.20) and also “a media literate person can decode, evaluate, analyse and produce both print and electronic media” (Aufderheide, 1997, p.20). In other words, it means having the skills to understand and interact with the media analytically, critically and knowledgeably. At the same time, Buckingham (2002b) points out the ability to access information alone do not make one media literate. Having access to information without the ability to analyse and evaluate that information is problematic and leaves us drowning in information. Considine (2002) argues that students must become media literate by acquiring knowledge. The knowledge he implies is critical awareness; the ability to comprehend, evaluate, verify, validate, compare, contrast, accept or reject information based on clearly defined critical criteria. Likewise, there is a great deal of diversity of thinking about how media literacy should be conceptualized.

### **2.1.2 Growth of Media Literacy Discipline**

Over the past few decades there has been a significant growth in media literacy discipline and it has experienced several shifts. Proponents have developed many different approaches and media literacy movements worldwide. The initial movements were concerned with negative effects of media and took a protectionist approach, as noticed by Shanthi & Khoo (2006, p.2) “the intent of media study was first concerned with the supposedly harmful effects of media and there was a move to inoculate media audiences, specifically the young”. Media, specifically television was seen as an instrument of evil which corrupted the minds of audiences with immoral ideas, tastes, values and lifestyles (Buckingham, 2002b, Ferguson, 1991, Masterman, 1985). It was guiding the audience to assess the positive and negative values with a protectionist dimension. Since then media literacy attained a critical edge following the developments in sociology and cultural studies.

In recent years, the debate on traditional and new media has shifted to frame literacy in terms of its enabling and empowering capacity (Livingstone, 2002). It moved towards creating communities of active media makers who can be expected to exercise some degree of agency in deciding what textual positions they will assume or resist as they engage with complex social and cultural forces in their everyday interactions (Masterman, 1985, Hilton, 1996, Luke, 1998). According to Buckingham (2002b), the countries with the most ‘mature’ forms of practice in media education are seeing media education not as a form of protection, but as a form of preparation. It aims to develop students’ understanding of, and participation in, the media culture that surrounds them.

Commenting on the future of media literacy Hobbs (1998, p.28) expresses:

“The future of media literacy depends on the development of long-term, rigorous, and intellectually demanding educational work with classroom teachers as essential, even primary, partners in implementing media literacy in schools.”

Hobbs (1998) calls for an increased effort to bring the knowledge and skills about media analysis and production to a wider variety of settings, reaching more educators and a large number of students through coordinated programmes, events, and educational experiences. In addition, she feels it is critical to develop theory and research that predicts, documents, measures, and evaluates the complex processes of learning and teaching about the media.

## **2.2 New Media Development**

Today, the new media technology has developed and penetrated into people's life so much that it is impossible to think about life without the web (Gauntlett, 2000). Especially, it is very much visible with the student community who seem to be fully attached with the new media. In this regard, Livingstone (2002, p. 11) argues:

“We can no longer imagine our daily lives – at leisure or at work, with family or friends – without media and communication technologies. Nor would we want to. As we enter the twenty-first century, the home is being transformed into the site of a multimedia culture, integrating audio visual, information and telecommunication services.”

More significantly, students new media use is seen as a “cultural medium to the wider world, opening paths for new impulses” (Laegran 2002, p.157), where new social spaces, cultural meanings and cyber-relations are created (Laegran and Stewart 2003). This

changing media landscape is offering new opportunities and challenges to the students. It is providing opportunities for democratic and community participation for students, for self-expression and showcasing creativity (Buckingham, 2002a). According to Gauntlett (2000), one good thing about the new media is that it allows for diversity of creative participation among the students, which keeps it alive.

Another significant change is the shift from one way mass communication towards more interactive communication between medium and user. For example, it allows the users to be involved in a two-way process, not only reading web pages, but also to amend, interact and creating new pages (Gauntlett, 2000). Therefore, it is not a one-way experience and most importantly it allows students to connect locally or globally. There is a significant multiplication of personally owned media, which is facilitated by the reduction in price for media goods. According to Livingstone (2002), new media is providing students opportunities to construct identities and to form new social groupings. In addition, she argues that today, the computer is becoming a more powerful machine and also the capacity of the internet to carry various types of data has increased to form web television, video on demand, interactive television and so forth.

It is also pointed out by scholars (Buckingham, 2002a & Gauntlett 2000) that with these developments of new media especially towards online videos, the students are exposed to more screen media and they are undoubtedly watching more videos compared to students a decade or so ago. In this regard, Buckingham (2002a) points out that videos are especially popular among the students and they spent a large amount of time watching videos.

Nowadays, students lives are increasingly mediated by information and communication technologies and their use of these technologies depends in turn on the social and cultural contexts of their daily lives (Buckingham, 2002a). In this regard, Livingstone (2002) argues that the cultures of both the household and society shape access and use of new media in complex but significant ways among students. In addition, she argues social class strongly affects media in the home. On the whole, it is important that students use these rapidly changing new media technologies wisely.

Although new media is providing new opportunities, while at the same time, some are concerned about the end of childhood, innocence, traditional values and authority (Buckingham, 2002a). Talking about ‘moral panics’ centre on the internet, with concerns on violence, stereotyped or commercially exploitative content, Livingstone (2002, p.5) argues that:

“.....each panic tends to move from ‘pessimistic elitism’ to a ‘more optimistic pluralism’, in other words, initial calls for technocratic and legalistic measures such as censorship and direct social control give way to a tacit paternalism and the advocacy of moral education or media literacy.”

As the new media is present everywhere and access is becoming wider, it is no longer possible to monitor or control the usage of new media by students, therefore, as advocated by media literacy scholars (Buckingham, 2002a & Potter, 2005), it is better to prepare them or empower them with media literacy skills, which will make them as critical and autonomous users and makers of media.

### **2.2.1 New Media, Students' Participation and Changing Literacies**

One of the significant feature of new media is it allows students to express themselves effectively through the media (Buckingham, 2002a). According to new media scholars (Livingstone, 2002 & Buckingham, 2002a), the digital media brings students together, allow students to express themselves and building communities with common interests and ideas. For example, new media offers students an opportunity to produce creative, expressive media products such as a painting, or a poem, or a video clip and display them to a global audience (Gauntlett, 2000). No doubt, this is a significant development of the new media. Without the web, students would not have the opportunity or resources to find an audience for their work. Similarly, before the advent of Internet, communities were basically people who lived or worked close to each other. Gaunlett (2000) contends that the new media and internet brings like minded students to form communities regardless of where they are located. Students with similar interests and similar attitudes can join communities to share views, exchange information and media. In addition Gauntlett (1996) argues that what is more important is students should learn about the opportunities for education and creativity new media offers.

As new media is developing rapidly along with students' participation, it is necessary to develop students' literacy with regard to new media. As Livingstone (2002) argues with the changing media, the literacies required are also changing. In addition, Livingstone (2002) argues today the students need to learn about graphic design, video clip, compositing, editing video, still and audio, animation and so forth. Similarly, Kellner (2002) argues the new media, particularly computers and internet are accompanied by